



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Secretary General on the 2014 Program Outline

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Gary Robbins
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 16, 2013

The United States welcomes the release of the 2014 Program Outline and its Compendium of Executive Summaries, and we wish to thank the Secretary General, the fund managers, and their staff members for the submission.

The Program Outline deserves careful consideration. The United States will read it thoroughly, and we look forward to detailed discussions over the next several weeks with fund managers about the most effective ways to address their mandates in 2014. During these discussions, we will be encouraging fund managers to focus activities on areas where they can have the most impact given the priorities of host governments, participating States, and limited budgetary resources.

As we stated earlier this year, we were disappointed that important U.S. priorities were not reflected in the OSCE's 2013 Unified Budget. We will be reflecting on the shortcomings of the 2013 budget as we discuss the 2014 Program Outline. For example, the institutions' budgets have been constrained at unacceptably low levels, impeding their abilities to fulfill the tasks given to them by participating States. We saw this last year when ODIHR cancelled election observation missions due to a funding shortfall. We are not willing to see this happen again, and will support additional resources for the institutions so that their budgets can keep pace with inflation and exchange rate fluctuations. We will also support specific requests that will help the institutions meet the demands of participating States for assistance, such as ODIHR's call for a contingency fund to address unexpected expenses that arise from election observation activities.

In the first dimension, the 2013 budget also fell short. Despite the security challenges in Central Asia, for example, we were unable to reach consensus on bringing the Border Management Staff College (BMSC) into the OSCE Unified Budget. The BMSC has grown into a key tool, helping participating States, in Central Asia and the wider OSCE region, to secure borders, fight terrorism, impede drug smuggling, combat corruption, and inhibit human trafficking. We expect that the BMSC will be fully funded out of the Unified Budget in 2014.

We will continue to call on all fund managers to assess their programs to ensure they are targeting areas truly in need of assistance, where an impact can be achieved. We commend those fund managers, for example in Southeastern Europe, who have recognized their successes and the achievements of their host governments and as a result are streamlining

operations and reducing assistance. This should be the trend in the region. In particular, we continue to believe that the OSCE Mission in Kosovo is too large and must be reduced to foster greater local accountability.

Finally, we encourage the OSCE to take a close look at its structure. The percentage of the budget spent on the Secretariat has increased from 19% five years ago to 23% in 2013 at the expense of field operations. Personnel costs have also increased to 61% of the OSCE Unified Budget despite significant reductions in the number of people working for the Organization. These are trends that we cannot support, and we encourage the Secretariat to find a way to rebalance the operations, placing an emphasis on activities and personnel in the field.

We look forward to working with you, Mr. Secretary General, the incoming Swiss and Serbian Chairmanships, the other 56 participating States, and fund managers as we prepare for 2014. We will need to hear from you the specific details about what is in jeopardy when funding requests are not met. This will help us to prioritize and to balance demands during these lean economic years. In our quest to reach consensus on next year's budget, we expect that each one of us will need to compromise, but we are confident that working together we will be able to identify core priority activities that advance the goals of the OSCE across all three dimensions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.